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ABSTRACT

The need to incorporate African oral literature into secondary-school black-studies curricula is expressed, and specific practical approaches are outlined. It is hoped that stereotypes about the primitiveness and simplicity of African cultures can be counteracted by the study of the complexity and variety within their oral traditions. The important roles of the oral tradition are socialization and transmission of values. Inclusion of the study of oral traditions will expand the scope of black studies into other subject areas--art, literature, music, drama, and speech--thereby facilitating greater student involvement in black culture. Also, students will see different kinds of relationships between various countries of the Americas, their black populations, and Africa. Extensive descriptions are given of the five general types of African oral literature: prose; poetry; drama; drum; and contemporary forms, such as popular songs and films. For each general type, the author suggests books appropriate for secondary-school curriculum and he stresses the importance of hearing the literature, not just reading it. (Author/AV)

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AFRICAN ORAL LITERATURE IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICU

by Clarence G. Seckel, Jr.

This paper has two purposes. The first part provides a rationale for including the study of African oral literature as part of a black studies curriculum in the secondary schools. This rationale is necessary for several reasons. First, oral literature is not usually studied to any great extent in the secondary school. Second, including a study of oral literature might help to revitalize black studies programs which are not meeting student needs. Third, oral literature will help to give black studies greater definition, so that it doesn't become just another contribution to the study of white civilizations.

The main intent of the second part of this paper is to provide a number of specific and practical approaches to the study of African oral literature within a general context of a secondary school curriculum.

The paper takes its impetus from a quote by Chinua Achebe, a famous Nigerian novelist. Achebe said that: "African societies of the past, with all their imperfections were not consumers but producers of culture." (Killam: 1973:13) This is an extremely important concept for anyone involved in the teaching of black studies, because just a year before Achebe made the statement in 1964, Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper, a famous English historian, made the following statement: "Perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none; there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness. . . and darkness is not a subject of history." (Killam: 1973:74)

Since Professor Trevor-Roper made these rather infamous remarks a new kind of unfortunate exploitation has overtaken Africa and the history and culture of black people in the diaspora have been used within the last decade by curriculum developers, publishing firms, textbook writers and new-found experts to push a new and costly product on the educational market called "Black Studies."

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> When the cry for African studies in United States schools went up in the mid-1960's, one of the loudest and most respected claims was that African studies would be good for black American children. The assumption was that black students would develop a sense of cultural pride by learning about the accomplishments of Africans, leading ultimately to an improved self-image. A crucial element in this assumption, of course, was that black children would be able to identify with their African heritage. (Clark: 1972:35)

Raymond Giles, assistant professor of education and chairman of the Department of Afro-American Studies at Smith College, tested this assumption in what has been called the "Harlem Study," and found that African Studies did not achieve its expectations. (Clark: 1972:35)

Now that there is some positive indication that the current black studies programs are not producing satisfactory results, and the militant sixties have turned into the apathy of the seventies, educators can begin the task of what

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Professor Patterson of Harvard calls "re-thinking black history." In discussing the process of rethinking black history, Patterson makes the following observations:

> Most importantly, a new approach to the subject of black history involves new methods of inquiry. The major difference between white American and black American history is the fact that the former concerns itself not so much with an elite and white people as with a literate people, while the latter must concern itself with a people who are not so much lower class and black as preliterate and nonliterate.
>
> The task facing students of black history, then, is the development and adoption of techniques of inquiry involving the use of nonliterary sources. This is necessary for the study of both the West African and American areas of the subject. Briefly, the major nonliterary sources are material remains, Afro-American Creole languages and oral traditions, including transcribed folktales, folksongs, and the like. (Patterson: 1972:31)

Educators have a responsibility to follow Patterson's dictates and rethink their black studies curriculum by looking back to the beginning, to 1964, when Achebe said that "Africans were not consumers but producers of culture." One very important element in this "rethinking" process is a reexamination of African culture, because the type of culture that has been incorporated in the black studies curriculum has been the Ghana-Mali-Songhai big civilization type culture. This approach was introduced to combat the denial of African history by Trevor-Roper and others. But what must be introduced into a new black studies curriculum is that African history did not begin or end with these empires. "There were many societies--stateless and otherwise--before, during, and after. They were all cultures." (Patterson: 1972:31) The fact that most of these African cultures did not have a written language caused them to be labeled inferior and primitive and not fitting for study in secondary schools.

Hopefully educators will heed the advice of Patterson, Giles, and James Sanzare, who in a recent article in The Social Studies made the following comment:

> African history . . . has given historians the opportunity to break out of the narrow confines of research limited to the written word. They are turning today to the skills of other specialists . . .
>
> Oral tradition in the form of legends and ballads is a rich source for Africa's past. Professional minstrels and praise singers are found through Africa's history and the continent. Their recitation of dynastic history and the deeds of contemporaries through generations have told us much when properly and critically evaluated. (Sanzare: 1974:303)

The remaining part of this paper will suggest some ways in which this rich oral tradition can be used by classroom teachers in the secondary school to make black studies more relevant to their students.

First, by presenting the complexity and variety within the oral traditions of Africa, many stereotypes about the primitiveness and simplicity of African cultures can be counteracted.

Second, students will be provided an opportunity to appreciate the importance of oral tradition as a transmitter of values and as a very important aspect of socialization. Leon E. Clark has stated that:

> . . . more and more people in the U. S. are indulging in self-analysis, raising value questions and experimenting with alternative life styles.
>
> What education can do . . . is grasp student interest (in such activities) and turn it into a larger social awareness. (Clark: 1973:49)

Presenting the world views and value systems of African cultures as translated into the black communities of the Americas will provide alternatives to the materialistic, technological, environment polluting aspects of Euro-American civilization. And one of the best ways for students to learn about the particular alternative of the African approach to civilization, is through African oral traditions. James Sanzare states that "Folktales . . . reveal basic values as well as features of people's ways of life. The proverb is widely used among many Africans and tells us what they value and respect the most." (Sanzare: 1974:306)

Third, black studies should not be limited to social studies, but should be interdisciplinary in scope. Educators have a habit of isolating black studies when in reality black expressive culture permeates almost all facets of life. Including black oral tradition will help integrate black studies into such other subject areas as art, literature, music, drama and speech, and therefore can expand the scope of student involvement in black culture.

Fourth, including oral literature in the curriculum would help the student see different kinds of relationships between the various countries of the Americas and their black populations and Africa. (Patterson: 1972:29) In particular, it would be a welcome supplement to the "legacy of slavery" as a unifying factor within the black experience.

These four points will now be elaborated upon with particular attention being given to specific teaching proposals and suggested resources for implementing the study of African oral literature in the secondary schools.

(1) Using the complexity and variety of oral literature to help dispell the notions that African culture is primitive and simple.

When students are asked to write down the first words that come to mind when they hear the word "Africa," one of the constant entries is that Africa is "primitive." Equating Africa with primitiveness is a legacy of technological ethnocentrism and racist justification of slavery. Murphy and Stein in Teaching Africa Today state that:

> In a fundamental sense, Europeans were unable to resolve the moral conflict between their values of human dignity and the squalid realities of their enslavement of Africans--except by constructing a myth that portrayed the African as something less than human.

> Americans are intimately aware of the blunter forms of this racist myth, which is under sustained attack within the American culture. But even as we gradually free ourselves from the more obvious errors of the myth, we retain its legacy in our attitudes about Africa. (Murphy and Stein: 1973:96-97)

One of the most persistent of these attitudes is that a nonliterate society is inferior to a literate society. Oral literature, if it is considered at all, usually is referred to as the myths and tales of a primitive and superstitious folk.

One of the most important behavioral objectives for teaching black studies is student attitudinal change regarding the status of nonliterate societies. This cannot be achieved through didactic sermonettes on the "noble savage" or a dialectic on semantics. The best approach is to allow the student to see "where he is at" regarding nonliterate societies. One device is to have students write down all the types of oral literature they can think of. This will usually result in the naming of myth and folklore. Then the teacher can hand out a detailed outline of the various categories of African oral literature (see Appendix A). When the two lists are compared, the students will show surprise and hopefully interest. The teacher can then use the outline to successfully debunk the attitude of primitiveness.

To provide a context into which later more specific instructional approaches to the study of oral literature can be applied, the outline referred to in Appendix A will be discussed in detail with examples and references to various books on the subject.

The oral literature of Africa can be divided into five general types: prose, poetry, drama, drum, and the contemporary uses. (Finnegan: 1970)

There are several specific types of prose, one of which is the narrative. Probably the most familiar type of African narrative is the myth which includes stories concerning a supreme being, the activities of lesser deities, or the origin of the world, mankind, cultural artifacts and institutions as a result of the activity of supernatural beings. Myths are one of the most important narratives for the student of African cultures to try and understand, because they give meaning and insight to the myriad conceptual systems and religious rituals of Africa. An inexpensive resource which includes African myths is African Myths and Tales, edited by Susan Feldmann. (1963)

The historical tale is another form of narrative which usually can be distinguished from the myth because its purpose is to account for the real events. A kind of literary specialist called the griot exists in some African societies; he is charged with the task of transmitting oral history from one generation to the next. For a very readable account about the griot and oral history, see Through African Eyes, Volume III, edited by Leon E. Clark. (1971: 33-40)

A third type of narrative focuses on real and fictional people. A good sampling of this kind of narrative is found among the "Tales of Human Adventure" in African Myths and Tales. (Feldman: 1963)

Animal tales are yet another kind of specific narrative with which many secondary school students will already be familiar. In these tales animals act like people in realistic social settings. In the introduction to African Myths and Tales, Susan Feldmann makes the following observations about a very common type of animal tale:

> The sophistication of African folklore is evident in its central figure, the highly humanized animal trickster . . . Anansi the Spider figures as the hero of an enormous body of West African folktales and is known under various names in the folklore of (West Africa). Hare is best known in East Africa . . . (Feldman: 1963:14)

Barrett in Soul-Force gives further insight into the character of the animal trickster:

> Another important character of African folklore is the tortoise, which can be found in Yoruba stories and in the tribal literature of West and Central Africa. This creature is probably the slowest of all the forest creatures, yet figures prominently in the "sport pages" of African folklore as a consistent winner of all races. The tortoise is said to appeal to the African mind because it is uncanny and mysterious; and it is considered sovereign in the forest even though it is inoffensive and does not prey on even the smallest creature. Africans respect the tortoise because it subsists on a minimum of food and is practically immune to injury. Because of (this characteristic) and the additional ones of longevity, silent movement, and dogged determination in overcoming obstacles, one can easily understand why the tortoise figures so prominently in African folklore. (Barrett: 1974:35)

This type of insight, provided by Barrett, is extremely important in studying animal tales. If a teacher is to successfully combat "primitiveness" through oral literature, animal tales in particular must not be viewed as simply folksy entertainment. The importance of the logic behind selecting certain animals must be stressed. Most Africans, unlike most Euro-Americans, are and long have been one with their environment. Their philosophy has been to adapt rather than change their environment. Animals are an important part of that environment and therefore it is natural that animals are used as vehicles to help explain their world view.

Proverbs and riddles are two more examples of prose types in African oral literary traditions. Proverbs are statements of general truths. Each of the approximately eight hundred ethnic groups in Africa has a certain group of proverbs they call their own. Most people know these proverbs and they have important roles in the socialization process. Certain proverbs are so well known within an ethnic group that all that is needed are the first few words of a particular proverb and other persons will know what proverb is intended.

J. P. Makouta-Mboukou, in Black African Literature, states that:

> Proverbs are the most poetic and the most carefully fashioned form of folk literature. They have a stable form and do not suffer from variations brought about by the whims of individuals.

> Moreover, proverbs are carriers, bearers of philosophical potentialities and of immutable inner meanings.
>
> Because they are both precise and concise, proverbs impress, decide, convince: they settle arguments.
>
> The proverb is the form most used in the traditional African court of justice where regular judicial contests occur. It used to happen, and it still happens occasionally, that an entire legal case would be argued solely in proverbs.
>
> The most concise, the most polished form of thought, the proverb in principle requires age, reason, experience, and reflection.
>
> That explains why this literary form is normally found in that part of society which is mature and accustomed to reflection. (Makouta-Mboukou: 1973:15-16)

There is also interesting insight into the classification of proverbs in Leonard Barrett's Soul-Force. He makes the following observations:

> African proverbs speak to various aspects of life. First and most important are those which deal with man's relation to his God (e.g., "If you want to tell God, tell the wind.") The second are those which deal with man's moral behavior (e.g., "The pursuit of beneficience brings no evil," and the third, those which deal with aspects of social virtues (e.g., "When people hold you in respect, hold yourself in respect, too.")

A good source for proverbs is A Treasury of African Folklore by Harold Courlander. (1975)

In addition to the proverb, another form of oral literature used for socialization and educational purposes is the riddle. Riddles either ask a question or state a dilemma. They teach about the environment and help develop certain mental qualities. Makouta-Mboukou says "The riddle game . . . develops the memory, imagination, thought processes, and judgement by associating, thought processes, and judgment by associating signs with ideas, ideas with signs, ideas with ideas, and signs with signs." (Makouta-Mboukou: 1973:19) Samples of riddles may be found in A Treasury of African Folklore, (Courlander: 1975) Yoruba Poetry, (1970) by Ulli Beier, and Yes and No, The Intimate Folklore of Africa, (1961) by Alta Jablow.

Word play, which would include tongue twisters and puns, is a type of narrative used almost exclusively for entertainment. The most extemporaneous type of narrative is the oration. There are specific types of orations for such important events as funerals and marriage arrangements. The orator on these occasions can be flexible and creative, but like the African artist, within a predefined structure.

Poetry is as important a type of oral literature as prose, or even more important than prose in many African ethnic groups. There are various types of poetry. Praise poetry is usually spoken about heroes, but can also be

about people, deities or even objects. Usually it is spoken about someone else, but sometimes there is "self-praise" poetry. A. C. Jordan in Towards an African Literature makes the following comments about praise-poems:

> The poem may be partly narrative, or partly or wholly descriptive. It abounds in epithets, very much like the Homeric ones, and the language in general is highly figurative.
>
> The bard, who was both composer and public reciter, was versed in tribal history and lore, as well as being witty. He held a position of honour in his community. It was therefore the greatest ambition of every boy to be at least a public reciter, if not a composer. In fact, every boy was expected at the very least to be able to recite his own praises, those of the family bull, those of the favourite family cow, even if composed by someone else, and was also expected to know the traditional praises of certain species of animals and birds. Any boy who lacked these accomplishments was held in contempt by the men as well as by other boys. (Jordan: 1973:21-22)

The funeral dirge is another type of poetry, composed specifically for funerals. In some African ethnic groups a person can have more than one funeral: for example, there is a funeral when the person is buried and then another funeral when the person's property is divided up. There are also annual memorial rites, especially for important persons or the dead in general.

There are many types of religious poetry in Africa. Some provides directions for specific rituals while other is comparable to hymns. Religious poetry also accompanies some divination, when the foretelling of the future is spoken in verse. A Treasury of African Folklore (Courlander: 1975) contains some examples of Hausa religious poetry.

Some poems become lyrics to songs which are related to the life cycle or expressions of love. Some poems are solos whereas others are combinations of leader and chorus response. There also are lyrics composed about domestic animals, if the society is predominately herders or farmers, or lyrics about some wild animals if the people hunt. A varied sampling of this kind of poetry can be found in Yoruba Poetry, (1970) edited by Ulli Beier. An example is this poem about the leopard:

> Gentle hunter
> his tail plays on the ground
> while he crushes the skull
>
> Beautiful death
> who puts on a spotted robe
> when he goes to his victim
> playful killer
> whose loving embrace
> splits the antelope's heart. (Beier: 1970:81)

There also exist many kinds of special occasion poetry. These occasions include such everyday events as working in the fields, grinding grain and paddling canoes. Poetry specifically for children is also part of the African oral literary tradition including lullabies and songs or chants which accompany games. A good source with many examples of this type of poetry is Yoruba Poetry. (Beier: 1970)

Drama is a third major division of African oral literature. There are both traditional and modern forms of drama. Traditional drama includes sacred drama in the form of myth and masquerade; secular drama occurs in the forms of straight play, entertainment, civic, song and dance drama, and finally, epic drama. (Killam: 1973:19-32) In discussing these varied forms of oral drama, J. P. Clark has observed that:

> First, the very myths upon which many of these dramas are based, so beautiful in themselves, serve to record the origins and raison d'etre of the institutions and people who own them. Secondly, dramas, like the Ijaw masquerade and Ullu ritual, represent spirits and gods which their worshippers seek to propitiate . . . They are therefore manifestations of a special religion. Thirdly, they serve a civic and social purpose by educating and initiating the young into the ways and duties of the community. In the process they help to knit together persons of similar background, giving them a common identity. Fourthly, . . . masquerade dramas foster good relations between members of one village and another. Fifthly, these dramas, whether sacred or otherwise, often provide the one occasion in the year that brings home all true native sons and daughters resident and scattered abroad. . . Sixthly, some (types of drama) induce that state of mind when the spirit is temporarily freed of its flesh shackles and the medium is invested with extra tongues that can foretell any imminent disaster and if possible, prescribe prevention. A seventh use . . . is as a vehicle for social comment, satire, and sheer spread of meaty gossip. And last, (it) . . . provides robust entertainment. (Killam: 1973:19-20)

Much modern African drama can be considered as part of oral tradition because it is deeply rooted in this tradition for much of its content and form. And it still serves, for the most part, a non-literate audience. Two resources for African drama are Nine African Plays for Radio (Henderson and Pieterse: 1973) and Ten One Act Plays (Pieterse: 1968)

A fourth major division of African oral literature is drum literature. Drum poetry is composed in ethnic groups where there is a tonal language spoken - for example, Twi, Fon, Yoruba, and other Bantu languages. In these languages, a change in the tonal level of some words is associated with a change in meaning. There are as many drums as there are tone levels in the language and the drums duplicate the rhythm of the speech. There can be no

drum literature without a spoken literature. The drums, for example, may duplicate the speech patterns of short proverbs and praises, which are well known to the people. Courlander, in A Treasury of African Folklore, (1975) gives a few examples of Akan drum poetry, and makes the following observation:

> The development of the poetic tradition has not been confined to the spoken voice. A great deal of Akan heroic poetry is conveyed through the medium of horns, pipes and drums. Although drums are used in Akan society for making a limited number of announcements, they are also vehicles of literature. On state occasions poems of special interest are drummed to the chief and the community as a whole. (Courlander: 1975:95)

It should be stressed to students that most of these varied forms of oral literature still exist in Africa today. It should also be noted that the oral literature of Africa is always changing and adapting to new forms of media to meet the demands of a new contemporary audience that is still to a great extent nonliterate. The transistor radio, for example, provides an important vehicle for new forms of oral literature. People may hear stories on the radio, and then retell them. Films also provide a new vehicle for presenting drama to the nonliterate masses. Other forms of modern oral literature include popular songs, national slogans, and ritual dramas performed on holidays and for national festivals. (Schmidt: 1973)

(2) Black oral literature as a transmitter of an alternative system of values.

There is ample evidence to show that the various forms of African oral tradition express the basic values of particular ethnic groups, and by studying this oral tradition, the student will be able to extract specific values different from his own. For example, Herskovits states that

> . . . folklore reflects both its natural and cultural setting. A substantial body of folktales is more than the literary expression of a people. It is, in a very real sense, their ethnography which, if systematized by the student, gives a penetrating picture of their way of life. (Herskovits: 1948:418)

Barrett also concludes that "all the research in African oral tradition suggests that the key to the African mind is hidden in the wisdom sayings, the proverbs, and in the folklore." (Barrett: 1974:31)

Okogbule Wonodi has made several useful observations regarding folk tales and their reflection of a society:

> Like other forms of literature, folk tales have a variety of themes and touch all aspects of the cultural, social, and even the political life of the community . . . In each case, an attempt is

made to explain the nature of the society: why certain things happen in certain ways and what would follow a violation of set traditions.

The poetic justice found in folk tales is consonant with all of their basic uses - to reform and instruct the society.

It must also be noted that folk tales are elastic and progressive. Changes in the modes of behavior and values are continually filtering into age-old tales. (Wonodi: 1965:17-18)

There are a number of excellent anthologies of African folklore, but the best for teaching purposes, because it is an inexpensive paperback and also very thorough, is African Myths and Tales, (1963) edited by Susan Feldmann.

(3) Oral literature as an interdisciplinary approach to black studies.

Africans do not tend to compartmentalize life like Euro-Americans. This is one of the basic differences in their world views. All art forms in Africa are integrated and form a vital force within the society. For example, in the masquerade, referred to in the section on drama, all the various arts are interrelated to produce a total effect.

If the purpose of the new black studies is to successfully present an alternative value system to students, then black studies should not be presented in ways which are alien to the African world view.

The study of oral literature can be used as a vehicle for integrating black studies into other subject areas like art, literature, music, drama, and speech. When studying art, students can focus on the technique and significance of weaving proverbs into cloth. There is an article relating to this in the October 1975 issue of African Arts. (Smith: 1975) Another approach is studying the relationship between Ashanti proverbs and the design of gold weights. Courlander gives a detailed analysis of this in A Treasury of African Folklore. (1975)

Oral literature can be used to give more meaning and depth to a study of Afro-American literature. The main point here is to allow students to see the importance of oral literature in relation to written works. It would be valuable to point out several of the main differences between oral and written literature. The greatest difference is the interaction between story-teller and audience. This kind of interaction and audience participation naturally does not take place with written literary forms.

In the oral tradition, the audience and the teller have certain common expectations. For example, with folktales, one type of standard beginning is a series of riddles. When a certain type of riddle is heard, the audience knows a folktale will follow. Repetition of phrases is also standard and expected by the audience. Different ethnic groups expect a different number of repetitions, three or five, etc. Other standard audience expectations are common stereotyped characters like the spider or the rabbit, and specific ideophones that represent animal sounds or actions.

Such cultural expectations are common to specific ethnic groups and represent the framework within which the storyteller operates.

Students should also be aware of the important influence oral tradition has on written literature. First, certain forms of oral tradition may be used in written literature - e.g., praise poems. Second, many novels include "proverbs" in situations similar to their use in African life. (Lindfors: 1973) Three, themes of oral literature may be used in written works. Fourth, well known characters in oral literature may be used in written literature. For example, a man, in a modern novel, may be referred to as a lizard. This adds a meaning to the character for Africans familiar with the oral traditions. (Schmidt: 1968:16) Fifth, structural features of oral tradition are often used in written forms.

Students studying music can be introduced to the many and varied songs within the oral traditions. Drum literature could also be focused on.

An African masquerade could be part of a drama class production. Other forms of oral drama could be an addition to or a substitution for more traditional 'western' theatrical works.

Speech classes can be given new perspective by studying not only the Western concept of syllogism but also the African concept of Nommo. (Smith: 1972) The student will find the basic differences between these two approaches to public speaking clearly stated by Arthur L. Smith in his article, "Markings of an African Concept of Rhetoric." He states that

> . . . the African speaker means to be poet, not lecturer . . . it is possible to say that traditional African public discourse is given to concrete images capable of producing compulsive relationships and invoking the inner needs of audiences because of the inherent power of the images and not because of syllogistic reasoning. (Smith: 1972:372)

(4) Oral tradition as a unifying factor within the black experience.

Today as part of the 'rethinking' process of black studies, educators are trying to emphasize more positive relationships between the New World and Africa other than just the slavery issue - for example, the study of diplomatic contact, missionary contact, and PanAfricanism. However, the most positive contact between Africa and the Americas, if we want to keep student needs in mind, is the cultural contact especially expressed through the oral tradition. Barrett, in Soul-Force, provides some good background:

> The proverbs and folktales of Africa found in the New World are examples of the selected aspects of traditional culture which the Africans in diaspora thought necessary for survival in their new environment. These stories in themselves are enough proof that the Africans did not enter the New World tabula rasa, but rather as culture bearers, who within a short period stamped the New World with their cultural inheritance. (Barrett: 1974:37)

Sterling Stuckey, in "Through the Prism of Folklore: The Black Ethos in Slavery," gives numerous examples of how the Africans used satire, as part of their lexicon of oral literature to combat the effects of slavery. He concludes his article with the following observation:

> Slave folklore, then, affirms the existence of a large number of vital, tough-minded human beings who, though severely limited and abused by slavery, had found a way both to endure and preserve their humanity in the face of insuperable odds. What they learned about handling misfortune was not only a major factor in their survival as a people, but many of the lessons learned and esthetic standards established would be used by future generations of Afro-Americans in coping with a hostile world. (Chapman: 1972:457)

In conclusion, it is hoped that presenting oral literature as a tradition of eloquence continuing on in the Americas as a system of communication that is uniquely black, metaphorically rich and affectively powerful would be a substantial beginning in developing a more positive self-concept in students.

Teachers must be careful to stress the fact that an oral literature is not exclusively black. Other cultures have had - and still do have - extensive oral traditions. To emphasize this fact, a teacher may want to present African or Black American oral literature within a larger context. This can be done, for example, by comparing and contrasting various oral traditions: American Indian, Appalachian, or European.

It is also important to keep in mind that much is lost from the study of oral literature when it is only read. Oral literature should be heard whenever possible. The teacher should try to use as many devices as possible to present oral literature in a natural way. There are many audio-visuals that can assist the teacher in this manner, and some books which are written so that tales may be told. (Robinson: 1974, Serwadda: 1974 and Tracey: 1968)

APPENDIX A-AFRICAN ORAL TRADITION*

I. Prose

A. Narrative

1. Myth
2. Historical Tales
3. People Narratives
4. Animal Tales

B. Proverbs

C. Riddles

D. Word Play

1. Tongue Twisters
2. Puns

E. Funeral and Marriage Orations

II. Poetry

A. Praise Poetry
B. Funeral Dirge
C. Religious Poetry
D. Divination Poetry
E. Lyrical Poems
F. Special Occasion Poetry
G. Children's Poetry

III. Drama

A. Traditional

1. Sacred
   a. Myth
   b. Mask
2. Secular
   a. Straight Play
   b. Entertainment
   c. Civic
   d. Song and Dance Drama
   e. Epic Dramas

B. Modern

1. Folk
2. Literary Drama

*This outline is based on material presented by Nancy J. Schmidt in the course "Introduction to Modern African Literature" at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the fall of 1975.

IV. Drum Literature

V. Contemporary Oral Literature

A. Radio Programs
B. Popular Songs
C. National Slogans
D. Films
E. Ritual Drama During National Festivals

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